

In handling life... we need to understand and internalize something very important...God is Big...so odds are irrelevant... Why...because nothing is impossible with God.... which means God has the ability to do at anytime he chooses the impossible...and it also means at any time he can choose to not...Which encompasses part of the thrill of hope...when he does the impossible we are thrilled and when he chooses not...we also can be thrilled that there is something more that God is accomplishing...though we know it not...

And this is clearly stated ...

ISA 55: 8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. 9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. 10 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, 11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

In a nut shell...God says to Isaiah... his word comes down from heaven to earth and will return to him after it accomplishes all his will for that word...and He says his thought process as compared to ours on any subject matter... has greater expanse then the earth has expanse from the farthest heavens...

lets put this into perspective.... Astronomers have located Galaxies 12.3 billion light years from earth.

- **To grasp this...consider the fact that the sun is 93 million miles away...and that light traveling 186,000 miles per second escaping the sun reaches the earth in about 8 minutes. If we walk outside right now...the light rays you feel will be eight minutes old.**
- **light from the furthest galaxy takes 12.3 billion years to reach us....that distance is virtually incomprehensible!!**
- **So... your best and greatest thought about God on your best day falls 12.3 billion light years short of how great and how good God really is...**
- **His ways or methods are at least 12.3 billion light years better and more comprehensive than ours...**
- **We routinely underestimate God's power, wisdom and goodness by at least 12.3 billion light years....**
- **We give ourselves way to much credit. And sell him way to short...**
- **You see God has planned for every possible contingency that you and I will ever face....ever....**

1CO 2:9 However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" –

- **You cannot see it, hear it or conceive it...but it is there...**

Let me give you another example...of God computing skills

After lagging behind China for years, the United States now has the world's fastest supercomputer. IBM designed the supercomputer, called Summit. It is now the most powerful in the world. The blisteringly fast supercomputer marks the first time in years the US has claimed the title. After lagging behind China for years, the United States now has the world's fastest supercomputer. In June of 2018 a new computer was unveiled by the Department of Energy, which partnered with IBM and Nvidia to build it.

IBM designed the supercomputer, called Summit, It is the fastest, it is the smartest supercomputer," Summit boasts a peak performance of 200,000 trillion calculations per second and will be eight times more powerful than America's current top-ranked system, Titan. It took four years to build, according to Rometty.

In comparison if a human completed one equation per second, that person would have to live over 12.3 billion years to complete the amount of equations the machine is capable of handling in one second.

Summit, paid for by government grants, houses a staggering amount of processing components. The computer itself takes up a 9,250 square-foot room composed of rows of units weighing 340 tons total. It's home to 9,216 processing chips made by IBM, and 27,648 graphics processors made by Nvidia. All of this power in one place means that Summit needs 4,000 gallons of water per minute to be cooled, and the electricity that keeps it running is enough to light 8,100 homes.

But 200, 000 trillion equations a second is laughable compared to God, who took every contingency of creation from beginning to end into account before a nanosecond had even ticked off the clock of time.

- 4000 gallons of water a minute to cool the Summit supercomputer...is not even a drop in the bucket compared to Jesus the source of Living Water and his infinite supply...infinite supply
- and the electricity of 8100 homes to keep it running a minute...is nothing compared to Jesus the Light of the World!

So why are we worried about anything??? What A Thrill of Hope!!

******* The thrill of Hope is this....That God was guiding the events of history to prepare the way for Jesus to come to earth....and God continues to guide the events of History for Jesus Return**

We hear his promise to Malachi the prophet that God would send a messenger to introduce the Messiah...the anointed one of God...the king who God himself would choose!

****MAL 4:5 "See, I will send you the prophet **Elijah** before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. ⁶ He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."*

- **The last verse of the last book of the Old Testament prophesied that before the Messiah would come his immediate predecessor...would be a prophet with the power of Elijah...**
- **The last verse of the last book of the Old Testament prophesied that before the Messiah would come his immediate predecessor...would be a prophet with the power of Elijah...**
- **the power of Elijah...was through a mighty miracle to turn people to the true God...**
- **John the Baptist would have that same power ...yet no do one recorded miracle...he preached repentance...and be baptized ...wash yourselves for god is coming...**
- **400 hundred years later an event takes place...that is a long time!!**
- **Know it is in the silent years...where faith is lived and hope is developed practiced and matured...**
- **there is a time designated for everything...and everything in its time...think of all the possibilities and outcomes processes God and put into action to accomplish his will....absolutely mind boggling...**

So this is the first step in the historical fulfillment of the birth of Christ and must take place and this is how it does... and that is why Luke's Gospel starts the Christmas story with the narrative of John the Baptist's birth...first things first....

LK 1:5 In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. ⁶ Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. ⁷ But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.....impossible

- **In the Time of Herod King of Judea....Herod the Great ruled Palestine from 39bc to around 4 some say 2 BC.. he was an amazing architect and builder he constructed Aquaducts and built up and refurbished the temple in Jerusalem...but his leadership was stained in blood ... he was ruthless to perceived enemies and was very insecure killing members of his own family in fear...it was said you had more security as his pet than as his child..**
- **The times were not necessarily good for the Jews...but the time was right for God...**
- **Zechariah and Elizabeth didn't merely go through the motions in following God's laws; they backed up their outward compliance with inward obedience. Unlike the**

religious leaders whom Jesus called hypocrites, Zechariah and Elizabeth did not stop with the letter of the law which man could see....

- Their obedience was from the heart and was evident in their lives..., and that is why they are called “righteous in God’s eyes.”
 - They were both from the lineage of Aaron...**a prestigious badge of honor for a priest to have his wife from the line of Aaron also...**
 - Yet they were childless...which was considered a curse from God and also a valid reason to divorce... they would have paid dearly socially...
 - **Yet they carried this burden and neither rejected each other nor abandoned God...and served their community...**
 - **one of the fruits of the Spirit or of being righteous ...is long suffering...Patience**
- Gal 5:22 KJV* But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, **longsuffering**, gentleness, goodness, faith,
- GAL 5:22NIV* But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, **patience**, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
- **suffering I have known but it takes on a different feeling and meaning the more intense it is...**
 - **Zachariah was faithful while he and his wife walked in life long suffering...**

RO 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that **suffering produces perseverance;** ⁴ perseverance, **character;** and character, **hope.** ⁵ **And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.**

- **suffering changes us...suffering is almost always accompanied by loss...**
- **and how we handle loss..is a experientially learned ...explain it...some losses are easier some not...but all must be processed grieved and carried...to handle suffering well I must rest on the fact that I lack the ability to understand the ways of God but all my faith and Hope is in his character...and his good plan..**
- **Which takes us to Perseverance...Perserverance is carrying the weight of Why but keeping on the track of following The Who ...**
- **Which forms our CharacterCharacter is a "complex of mental and ethical traits" and those traits, or qualities, are "built into an individual's life." It is those qualities, those character traits, that determine a person's response in any given situation. dependable, trustworthy...hotheaded compassionate etc.**

– we carry on because we have Faith...and our Faith rest upon the goodness of God...the wisdom of God and the plan of God...all of which is beyond my ability to grasp...which fills us with the power of Hope...Hope is powerful because it gives me the strength to keep on keeping on...until I see the Good of my God ...

It is the same hope that carried Zechariah ... and this is what made Zachariah righteous

LK 1:8 **Once** (*only time*) when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, ⁹ he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰ And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

A Jewish priest was a minister of God who worked at the Temple managing its upkeep, teaching the people the Scriptures, and directing the worship services.

- At this time there were about 20,000 priests throughout the country—far too many to minister in the Temple at one time.
- Therefore the priests were divided into 24 separate groups of about 1,000 each, according to David's directions (1 Chronicles 24:3-19). So other lots would be drawn to determine which number of priest would serve...
- Zechariah was a member of the Abijah division, on duty this particular week. Each morning a priest was to enter the Holy Place in the Temple and burn incense. This great honor could only be done once in a priest lifetime...
- Lots were cast to decide who would enter the sanctuary, and one day the lot fell to Zechariah.
- But what appeared to be chance was not by chance ... Zechariah was on duty and that he was chosen that day to enter the Holy Place—
- Incense was burned in the Temple twice daily. 9am before the morning sacrifice and 3pm after the evening sacrifice...
- The priest would be told when to light the incense and afterward would pronounce a blessing on the people from the balcony
- When the people saw the smoke from the burning incense, they prayed. The smoke drifting heavenward symbolized their prayers ascending to God's throne along with the sacrifice...

LK 1:11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. ¹³ But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. **(quit praying that prayer 20 years ago...God did not forget)** Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John.

Know it is in the silent years...where obedience is taught practiced and matured...

- Persevere...they know that life is always in a preparation mode...a journey
- Interrupted by arriving at destinations...yet to begin the journey again

1.The " Do not be afraid " of unanswered prayer: *" Luke 1:13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John.*

- Every prayer will be answered, every wrong righted, every hurt healed...all the suffering will end...that is what the Christmas promise is all about...we give each other gifts...

God gives us the hope of his promise to heal us...the timing and circumstances are in his control...but his promise to do it gives us the courage to face anything and go through it...

What he had hoped for and given up hope on....God simply saw it as a timing issue!

Luke 1: 14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, ¹⁵ for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born.

- The thrill of the hope you had is not realized...and it will be far greater than what you would have imagined or experienced if you had a child in your younger years...

Just as Paul say it will be when God answers prayer!

1CO 2:9 However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" –

- He will be filled by the Holy Spirit from Birth...He will be connected to God from birth...
- He will be a joy to you! And you will be *delighted* (enjoy, enchanted by) by him
- He will never have a drinking problem

Luke 1:16 He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—(from the heart)to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

- "Angels are spirit beings who live in God's presence and do his will. Here, Gabriel (1:19) delivered a special message to Zechariah. This was not a dream or a vision. The angel appeared in visible form and spoke audible words to the priest.
- God had heard his prayer for a son...why the delay in answering?...once past the childbearing age ...spiritual enemies would not be looking at you any more...
- **God worked in an "impossible" situation—Zechariah's wife was barren—to bring about the fulfillment of all the prophecies concerning the Messiah.**
- **And we must wait for God to work in his way, in his time, for his purpose**

******The angel not only tells him he will have a son but what name to give him..**

- *John* means “the LORD is gracious,” and *Jesus* means “the LORD saves.” Both names were prescribed by God, not chosen by human parents.
- John was set apart for special service to God. He may have been forbidden to drink wine as part of the Nazirite vow, an ancient vow of consecration to God
- Also this is Luke’s first mention of the Holy Spirit, Luke refers to the Holy Spirit more than any other Gospel writer. Because Luke also wrote the book of Acts, we know he was thoroughly informed about the work of the Holy Spirit.
- Luke recognized and emphasized the Holy Spirit’s work in directing the beginnings of Christianity and in guiding the early church.
- The presence of the Spirit was God’s gift given to the entire church at Pentecost. Prior to that, God’s Spirit was given to the faithful for special tasks. **We need the Holy Spirit’s help to do God’s work effectively.**

LK 1:18 Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years." (*impossible time, bad timing*)

- Zechariah want to help the angel out with some pertinent information...though he likes the idea of have in a son...the timing is all off....not just a little but by years...
- Zechariah...now informed correctly with the right information...he ask the angel to of “prove to me””how can I be sure?”

LK 1:19 The angel answered, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. ²⁰ And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day (*specific time*) this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time." (*on time*)

- Notice...the Spiritual strategy...the information given to Gabriel ...in the presence of God...no demonic entities present to hear the message
- Relayed to a priest in the Holy Place of the Temple...no demonic entities present
- So they do not know.
- He Renders Zechariah mute ...he is not telling anyone...and if He does...enemy will not believe...pride will not allow him to be told anything, he cannot figure out himself...
- Sometimes we just have to be quiet...and see God work...

LK 1:21 Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. ²² When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak. *LK 1:23* When his time of service was completed, he returned home. ²⁴ After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and

for five months remained in seclusion. (quiet reflection time)²⁵ "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days (present time) he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people." (cleansing time)

- God took away her disgrace...but she served him even when inside she felt disgraced...
- **The right time to serve God is all the time...let him deal with every thing else...**
- **Timing is in God's hand time is what we deal with...This is your time use it well...and leave the timing of things up to God...**

*LK 18:7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? ⁸ I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he **find faith** on the earth?"*

end

***LK 1:5 *In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. ⁶ Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. ⁷ But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years.*

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- **not a good time ...to have Jesus come along...a killer is on the loose!!**
- **but the time was right for God...**
- **Zechariah and Elizabeth** didn't merely go through the motions in following God's laws; they backed up their outward compliance with inward obedience.
- Unlike the religious leaders whom Jesus called hypocrites, Zechariah and Elizabeth did not stop with the letter of the law which man could see....
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- **the odds of someone considered cursed by Godwere really bad...**
- **Yet they carried this burden and neither rejected each other nor abandoned God... qualities god can use...**